

REMARKS/ARGUMENTS

I. Introduction

Applicants have reviewed the Office Action mailed 3/5/2003 (Paper No. 9) and thank the Examiner for the indication of allowable subject matter. Claims 1-28 have been rejected. Claims 20 and 23-28 were previously withdrawn. Claim 19 is objected to. In this amendment, Applicants have amended claims 1 and 21, added new claims 29-31 and have cancelled claim 19 without prejudice. Therefore, upon entry of this amendment, claims 1-18, 22 and 29-31 will be pending.

II. Drawings

The drawings were objected to as failing to comply with 37 CFR 1.84(p)(5) because they include the following reference sign(s) not mentioned in the description: 30, 68, 230. Applicants submit a set of corrected drawings, which accompany this amendment, removing the reference numerals not mentioned in the specification, namely reference numerals 30, 68 and 230.

III. Allowable Subject Matter

Claim 19 was objected to as being dependent upon a rejected base claim, but would be allowable if rewritten in independent form including all of the limitations of the base claim and any intervening claims. In accordance with the Examiner's suggestion, Applicants have rewritten claim 19 in independent form, including all of the limitations of intervening claim 18 and base claim 1, as new claim 29. Accordingly, new claim 29 is believed to be in condition for allowance.

IV. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §102

A. Claims 1-10 and 12-14 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. §102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 4,951,974 to Schabert et al. For at least the following reasons, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Regarding amended claim 1, nowhere does Schabert disclose a coupling assembly that includes a first fluid conveying member that includes at least one engagement feature and a second fluid conveying member that includes at least one locking feature configured to mate with the engagement feature of the first fluid conveying member, as recited in the claim. Rather, Schabert discloses a remote-controlled screw connection for connecting two flanges. Unlike Applicants' claimed invention, none of the screw connecting members disclosed in Schabert conveys a fluid.

The claims that depend from claim 1 include additional patentably distinct limitations, and are therefore patentably distinct as well. For example, nowhere does Schabert disclose an engagement feature that comprises a plurality of tabs, as recited in claim 8 as filed. Rather, Schabert clearly discloses a splined profile 21 having a plurality of teeth. Additionally, as recited in claim 9 as filed, nowhere does Schabert disclose a locking feature that comprises a plurality of slots that are configured to receive the tabs recited in claim 8. Instead, Schabert discloses an inner splined profile region configured to accept the teeth of splined profile 21.

B. Claims 1-10, 12-18, 21 and 22 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent 3,207,535 to Wilson. For at least the following reasons, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

Regarding amended claims 1 and 21, nowhere does Wilson disclose a coupling assembly that includes a first fluid conveying member having at least one engagement feature and a second fluid conveying member having at least one locking feature configured to mate with the engagement feature, as recited in Applicants' claims. Instead, Wilson discloses an end fitting for a conduit (1) that includes a threaded nipple (3) and a ferrule (4), both of which are screwed to the end of the conduit (1). To prevent relative rotational movement of the nipple relative to the ferrule, a locking ring (12) is provided which is broached internally (13). The internal broaching (13) inter-engages with the external knurling on the nipple and ferrule to prevent relative rotational movement of the nipple and ferrule. However, the locking ring (12) is not a fluid conveying member, as recited in claims 1 and 21. Rather, the fluid conveying members are the nipple (13) and ferrule (14). In other words, Wilson does not include a second fluid conveying member having at least one locking feature configured to mate with the engagement feature, as recited in the claims.

The claims that depend from claim 1 include additional patentably distinct limitations, and are therefore patentably distinct as well. For example, nowhere does Wilson disclose an engagement feature that comprises a plurality of tabs, as recited in claim 8 as filed. Rather, Wilson clearly discloses a knurled profile having a plurality of knurlings. Additionally, as recited in claim 9 as filed, nowhere does Wilson disclose a locking feature that comprises a plurality of slots that are configured to receive the tabs recited in claim 8. Instead, Wilson discloses an internal broaching configured to accept the knurlings.

In another example, nowhere does Wilson disclose an engagement feature that includes a tapered ramp or apex, as recited in claims 12-14 as filed. Moreover, Wilson fails to disclose a coupling member that includes a release member moveably mounted on the first member to release the first member from the second member, as recited in claim 18 as filed.

For at least the reasons described above, the §102(b) rejections with respect to claims 1-10, 12-18, 21 and 22 are unsupported by the art and should be withdrawn.

V. Claim Rejections Under 35 U.S.C. §103

A. Claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Schabert et al. in view of U.S. Patent 4,280,723 to Moldestad. For at least the following reasons, Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

First, for at least the reasons detailed above in response to the Examiner's rejections under §102, Schabert fails to teach or suggest each of the limitations recited in amended claim 1, from which claim 11 depends. Second, there is no motivation in either Schabert or Moldestad to combine the reference teachings. More particularly, nowhere does Schabert suggest the need for a "keyed" arrangement in which only certain coupling members are capable of mating with other coupling members. Moreover, nowhere does Moldestad suggest the use of non-equidistantly spaced engagement features to inhibit rotation of one coupling member relative to the other. Rather, Moldestad requires the coupling members to rotate relative to one another to secure the members together. For at least these reasons, the Examiner has failed to make out a prime facie case of obviousness under §103(a), and the rejection should be withdrawn. See MPEP §2143.

B. Claim 11 was rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Wilson in view of U.S. Patent 4,280,723 to Moldestad. For at least the reasons detailed above in section (V.)(A.), Applicants respectfully traverse the rejection.

CONCLUSION

In view of the above, each of the presently pending claims in this application is believed to be in condition for allowance. Accordingly, the Examiner is respectfully requested to withdraw the outstanding rejection of the claims and to pass this application to issue.

It is believed that any additional fees due with respect to this paper have already been identified in any transmittal accompanying this paper. However, if any additional fees are required in connection with the filing of this paper that are not identified in any accompanying transmittal, permission is given to charge account number 18-0013 in the name of Rader, Fishman and Grauer PLLC. If the Examiner has any question or comments, he is kindly urged to call the undersigned to facilitate prosecution.

Respectfully submitted,

Dated: 6/24/03

By Bradley J. Dieck
Bradley J. Dieck
Registration No.: 47,526
Michael B. Stewart
Registration No.: 36,018
Rader, Fishman & Grauer PLLC
39533 Woodward Avenue, Ste 140
Bloomfield Hills, MI 48304
(248) 594-0651
Attorneys for Applicant